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Of their cunning in catching their prey, the following is an amusing anecdote from Evelyn:

"Of all sorts of insects," says he, "there is none has afforded me more diversion than the *venatores* (hunters), which are a sort of *lupi* (wolves) that have their dens in rugged walls and crevices of our houses; a small brown and delicately-spotted kind of spiders, whose hinder legs are longer than the rest. Such I did frequently observe at Rome, which, espying a fly at three or four yards distance, upon the balcony where I stood, would not make directly to her, but crawl under the rail, till being arrived to the antipodes, it would steal up—seldom missing its aim; but if it chanced to want anything of being perfectly opposite, would, at first peep, immediately slide down again—till, taking better notice, it would come the next time exactly upon the fly's back: but if this happened not to be within a competent leap, then would this insect move so softly, as the very shadow of the gnomon seemed not to be more imperceptible, unless the fly moved; and then would the spider move also in the same proportion, keeping that just time with her motion, as if the same soul had animated both these little bodies; and whether it were forwards, backwards, or to either side, without at all turning her body, like a well managed horse: but if the capricious fly took wing and pitched upon another place behind our huntress, then would the spider whirl its body so nimbly about, as nothing could be imagined more swift: by which means she always kept the head towards her prey, though, to appearance, as immovable as if it had been a nail driven into the wood, till by that indiscernable progress (being arrived within the sphere of her reach) she made a fatal leap, swift as lightning, upon the fly, catching him in the pole, where she never quitted hold till her belly was full, and then carried the remainder home."

"One feels a little sceptical, however, when he adds: 'I have beheld them instructing their young ones how to hunt, which they would sometimes discipline for not well observing; but when any of the old ones did (as sometimes) miss a leap, they would run out of the field and hide themselves in their crannies, as ashamed, and haply not to be seen abroad for four or five hours after; for so long have I watched the nature of this strange insect, the contemplation of whose so wonderful sagacity and address has amazed me; nor do I find in any case whatsoever, more cunning and stratagem observed. I have found some of these spiders in my garden, when the weather, towards spring, is very hot, but they are nothing so eager in hunting as in Italy.'"

And another of their cleanliness:

"We recently witnessed a more laborious process of cleaning a web than merely shaking it. On coming down the Maine by the steam-boat from Frankfort, in August 1829, we observed the geometric-net of a conic-spider (*Epeira conica*, WALCK.) on the frame-work of the deck, and as it was covered with flakes of soot from the smoke of the engine, we were surprised to see a spider at work on it; for, in order to be useful, this sort of net must be clean. Upon observing it a little closely, however, we perceived that she was not constructing a net, but dressing up an old one; though not, we must think, to save trouble, so much as an expenditure of material. Some of the lines she dextrously stripped of the flakes of soot ad-

hering to them; but in the greater number finding that she could not get them sufficiently clean, she broke them quite off, bunched them up, and tossed them over. We counted five of these packets of rubbish which she thus threw away, though there must have been many more, as it was some time before we discovered the manœuvre, the packets being so small as not to be readily perceived, except when placed between the eye and the light. When she had cleared off all the sooted lines, she began to replace them in the usual way; but the arrival of the boat at Mentz put an end to our observations."

The treatise ends with Gall-flies and Aphides, including the different kinds of tormentors of cattle. We gladly refer our readers, especially the young, to the work itself, and let them not think that because it is called entertaining, it will not be found highly instructive. It is a delightful consideration, that such are now the books we can put into the hands of youth, in which amusement and instruction are found so happily blended, instead of silly stories and wearisome histories.—Every branch of education has been improved, and it is only to be desired that natural history may form, more than it does, a portion of every person's knowledge, sure, as we are, that it must improve the mind, exalt the understanding, and diffuse a feeling of humanity towards the whole animated creation. A.

#### NOTICES OF BOOKS.

*The Companion to the Almanac, or Year Book of General Information for 1830.*

It is said, that the accidental circumstance of Mr. Brougham having called for an Almanac for some purpose, and being struck with the extreme absurdity of the book which was presented to him, was the cause of a sudden determination to have a really useful Almanac prepared by the society for the diffusion of useful knowledge. The idea was no sooner conceived, than it was acted upon—the various parts were distributed to competent persons, and in a time almost incredibly short, the British Almanac for 1828, was prepared. For the last two years, the society has also caused to be prepared, a book of additional information as a companion to the Almanac: the idea was a happy one, and it would be difficult to conceive any thing more complete, than the way in which it has been carried into practical effect. In a little book of 264 pages, price half a crown, we have a mass of information brought together, having a natural connection with the progress of time, and the ordinary uses of an Almanac, such as one could scarcely believe possible, until the book is examined. Of the volume for the present year, the first part contains "*Information connected with the calendar, the celestial changes, and the natural phenomena of the year*," and consists of eleven separate articles, every one of which is of the highest interest, and is treated with great simplicity and scientific knowledge of the various subjects, which comprise the eras and modes of marking and computing time, in the different countries of the world—observations in natural history, applicable to the various months—a short treatise on the tides of the sea, a meteorological essay, or natural history of the weather, and exact information concerning the various scales of the different thermometers,

which are in use in the world. The second part consists of "*General information on subjects of chronology, statistics, &c.*" and contains sixteen articles of the most interesting nature on these topics, including a comparison of all gold and silver foreign coins, with British money, and an accurate statement of the French measures and weights now in use, their scientific history, and their relative amount compared with British weights and measures. The third part consists of a concise account of the *Charitable and Literary Institutions* of the country—the various clubs, &c. and the fourth and last part, is a *condensed chronicle* of all the public events of the last year, containing brief abstracts of the acts of parliament, and the public documents prepared for parliament during the session.

The sale of the publication has, we believe, been immense, and that it should be so, is not at all surprising, considering the quantity of knowledge which has been "diffused" by its pages.

*The Excitement; or a Book to induce Boys to read.*—Waugh and Innes, Edinburgh; Whittaker, Treacher and Arnot, London. 1830.

THE object of this volume is to entice boys into reading by furnishing them with a series of narratives likely to engage and fasten their attention. The compilation is judiciously made from Voyages and Travels, Shipwrecks and Sufferings, and signal Preservations, Lion Hunts, Volcanoes and Sieges. The idea is a good one, and the selection such as to reflect credit on the judgment of the Editor.

#### PERIODICAL LITERATURE.

*The Quarterly Review*. No. 89. January, 1830.—London, Murray.

THIS will not be considered an entertaining number, for the *lightest* article in it, is Head's Forest Scenes and Incidents in the wilds of North America. In discussing the question of emigration and recommending that people should always go out in families rather than as isolated individuals, the reviewer thus contrives to weave a compliment into a delicate insinuation of murderous propensities against us wild Irish: "This is peculiarly to be borne in mind in the case of the *Irish*, for whom emigration, upon a great scale, is strongly advised by Mr. Head; they ought not to leave their parents, and they would not leave them: for though no other people under heaven regard the sixth commandment less than the miserable part of that unhappy nation, there are none (be it said to their honour,) who observe the fifth more dutifully." This is breaking our head with precious balms, and laying on healing cerate with a scalping knife, with a vengeance.

In the review of Mahomedanism unveiled, by the Rev. Charles Forster, B.D. Chancellor of Ardfer, &c. we were disappointed to find, that, very absurdly as we conceive, there is not a single sentence about the work placed at the head of the article: we had looked, with some degree of curiosity, for the opinion of the *Quarterly*, on Mr. Forster's very complacent view of the Arabic superstition. Our readers may, probably, not be aware that the singular